

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of providing preferential access for particular calls between preferred users of a communication network wherein said particular calls are established via circuits between switching nodes, said circuits comprising one circuit segment or a plurality of circuit segments connected in series, wherein for call setup each segment is selected from available circuit segments on a trunk between two switching nodes so that a circuit is set up enabling the calling user and the called user to communicate, which method includes the steps of:

permanently reserving at least one circuit segment on each trunk between switching nodes needed to set up circuits for said particular calls between users at least one of whom is a preferred user, a permanently reserved circuit segment being available only for said particular calls between users at least one of whom is a preferred user, and

dynamically allocating circuit segments selected from said reserved segments and needed to set up a circuit from a preferred user in the event of a call set-up request by said preferred user.

2. (Previously Presented) The method claimed in claim 1 wherein a user attribute is assigned to each user and corresponds to a particular category indication in the case of preferred

users included in the calling user identifier that is transmitted for setting up a circuit at the time of a call request.

3. (Previously Presented) The method claimed in claim 1 wherein a minimum-cost algorithm used to choose a circuit at the time of a call request gives priority to choosing the shortest circuit set up via one or more reserved circuit segments in series when the request emanates from a user who has a preferred user attribute relating to the call requested and uses an unreserved circuit segment of a trunk if no reserved segments of said trunk are available and said trunk has at least one unreserved segment available at the time.

4. (Previously Presented) The method claimed in claim 1 wherein processing capabilities of the network are used for all users in the event of saturation of a trunk concerning a call for which a user has a preferred user attribute.

5. (Currently Amended) A communication network including switching nodes with point-to-point connections provided by trunks enabling users to communicate who have communication terminals each individually connected to one of said nodes, each call being obtained by means of a circuit set up between the nodes of users connected by a circuit segment in each trunk used, which communication network includes hardware and/or software for implementing a method of providing preferential access for particular calls between preferred users of a communication network wherein said particular calls are established via circuits between switching nodes, said circuits comprising one circuit segment or a plurality of circuit

segments connected in series, wherein for call setup each segment is selected from available circuit segments on a trunk between two switching nodes so that a circuit is set up enabling the calling user and the called user to communicate, which network includes:

at least one permanently reserved circuit segment on each trunk between switching nodes needed to set up circuits for said particular calls between users at least one of whom is a preferred user, a permanently reserved circuit segment being available only for said particular calls between users at least one of whom is a preferred user, and

at least one of hardware and software which dynamically allocates circuit segments selected from said reserved segments and needed to set up a circuit from a preferred user in the event of a call set-up request by said preferred user.

6. (Previously Presented) The network claimed in claim 5 wherein a preferred user attribute is assigned to each user and corresponds to a particular category indication in the case of preferred users included in the calling user identifier that is transmitted for setting up a circuit at the time of a call request.

7. (Previously Presented) The network claimed in claim 5 wherein a minimum-cost algorithm used to choose a circuit at the time of a call request gives priority to choosing the shortest circuit set up via one or more reserved circuit segments in series when the request emanates from a user who has a preferred user attribute relating to the call requested and uses an unreserved circuit segment of a trunk if no reserved segments of said trunk are available and said trunk has at least one unreserved segment available at the time.

8. (Previously Presented) The network claimed in claim 5 wherein processing capabilities of the network are used for all users in the event of saturation of a trunk concerning a call for which a user has a preferred user attribute.

9. (Currently Amended) A method of providing preferred access for particular calls between users of a network, said network including at least two switching nodes and a plurality of circuit segments connected between said two switching nodes, said method comprising the steps of:

permanently reserving a subset of said circuit segments such that reserved and unreserved segments are provided between said two switching nodes;

according preferred status to a subset of users of said network; and

providing ~~higher priority~~ access to said reserved segments only for calls involving a user having preferred status and not then for calls not involving a user having said preferred status.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method of sharing capacity amongst users of a network, said network including at least two switching nodes and a plurality of circuit segments connected between said two switching nodes, said method comprising the steps of:

dividing said plurality of circuit segments into first and second segments;

according preferred status to a subset of users of said network; and  
for calls involving a user having said preferred status, providing higher priority access to said first segments than to said second segments, and wherein said first segments are only available to calls involving a user having said preferred status.

12. (Currently Amended) A communications network including at least two switching nodes and a plurality of circuit segments connected between said two switching nodes, wherein

said plurality of circuit segments include first and second segments with a call involving a user having preferred status having higher priority access to said first segments than to said second segments; and

said network includes at least one of hardware and software which dynamically allocates said first segments only amongst calls involving users having said preferred status, wherein said first segments are only available to calls involving a user having said preferred status.

13. (Canceled)